[652] the economic crisis which had become endemic, sought to withdraw for a brief period from office in order that popular indignation might be appeased. As it had become obvious, however, that the Opposition, headed by the Transylvanian and peasant groups of the old kingdom aided by the Bessarabians, would sweep the polls and deprive the Bratianu party of the privileges it had arrogated to itself during its last tenure of office, the government manoeuvred to appoint in its stead a political group on whose subservience it could count. The choice fell on General Averescu, who could not pretend to independence of action owing to the numerical weakness of his group, and who was forced to act in leading strings held by the Bratianus on account of his absolute dependence on their support. As a consequence of the prevailing exasperation throughout the country it could be foreseen with certainty that it would be impossible to secure a favourable majority at the election following the exit from office of the Bratianus, even if use was made of the devices habitually employed on such occasions.

Before the dissolution of the Chamber, therefore, the Bratianus passed a law reforming the electoral system then in use, which completely altered the very essence of democratic government. By the new system a party obtaining 40% of the total votes cast secured 70% of the seats in the Chamber, and thereby a party which did not possess the support of the majority of the electors might nevertheless secure an imposing majority in the Legislative Chamber. Through the passing of this measure into law, the coming to power of unpopular parties and royal favourites has been made possible, for owing to the malpractices and abuses current at elections, it is relatively easy in Rumania for any person in control of the state-machine to secure the requisite 40% of the votes necessary to ensure him complete domination of the Chamber.

In ordinary circumstances there would have been no necessity for this electoral law, since the public has usually a very wholesome respect for whatever party is in power, allowing it to organize the elections to suit its wishes, and permitting it to exert a dominating influence on the polls so that it may be said that the elections are always "made."

National Peasant Party, though it polled less than 50% of the votes cast, secured 272 seats against 114 won by the Opposition. (The Liberals obtained 28, and the section of the party led by M. G. Bratianu, 14 mandates.)

M. Vaida-Voevod having discharged the duty assigned to him retired from office; but as the National Peasant Party possessed a working majority in the newly-elected Chamber, it was called upon to assume power. The Opposition attempted to challenge the right of the National Peasant Party to govern the country owing to the smallness of the poll it secured at the elections, though it was the Liberal party itself, now heading the Opposition, which introduced the law conferring a majority of seats in the Chamber on the party which would poll 40% of the votes.

M. Maniu was besought by his partisans to resume once more the premiership, but after several interviews with the King, declared himself unable to do so. He recommended, however, M. Vaida-Voevod to undertake the task, and accordingly a Cabinet headed by the latter was formed which includes both M. Mihalache and M. Madgearu, and other prominent members of the party. The government thus formed proceeded to secure a loan of 50 million swiss francs, wherewith to pay its officials for the time being, and to publish its program, which in the main lines aims at: Reforming the present electoral law, reintroducing administrative decentralization, and reorganizing the railway administration. Equitable treatment of minorities is promised, as well as a modification of the law concerning the conversion of agrarian debts. At the same time State finances are to be reorganized with the co-operation of the League of Nations.

This last plan, however, will not work out so smoothly, for the Opposition will do its utmost to stir up popular feeling against it. Even when two League delegates arrived in June, 1932, to examine the economic situation, the Press was unanimous in deprecating this public investigation and treating it as an offence against the country's dignity. The most widely read paper, having a daily circulation of some 40,000 copies, appeared with a leading article entitled "the day of shame."

565 641 Iorga, spoke as follows at Bucau: "The upper class is totally devoid of an ideal, and of a moral mainspring, while the masses are not only tired and exhausted but impregnated by sullen dissatisfaction. The whole body of the State is in a condition of molecular dissolution." And this worthy, who according to the "Dreptatea" of May 19th, 1932, "compensated himself by seizing thirteen million lei on the evacuation of his tenure of the Ministry of the Interior in 1927," a feat which won for him at the time the appropriate name of "Vacuum cleaner," had the effrontery to conclude his oration with an appeal to the youth of the country to rally round him:—"We must change the moral structure of the country, but such a change cannot proceed from the old. We must appeal to the young intellectuals to join in the building of a new structure around us. Their place is not in the building which is tumbling down, but in those which are being built up. Come on, we are sure to win." If, indeed, Carol II has set his heart on saving his country by the help of such sorry individuals, we may well pity Rumania.

PRESENT-DAY PROBLEMS:
THE ELECTORAL LAW

646 666 The present electoral law, which confers a premium on the party which secures 40% of the total votes cast at an election and enables it to secure 70% of the mandates in the Chamber, was due to the initiative of the Bratianus who in 1926 aimed at installing General Averescu in office. They themselves had no need of this law, as at the elections which took place in 1927, 62% of the electors voted for them. It is a law that is favourable to groups devoid of popular support, as they can very easily, when in control of the administrative machinery, so manipulate the elections as to secure the requisite 40% which would confer on them a majority of 70% in the Chamber. So that as long as this law is not repealed there is little chance of a really popular party being elected to office, except if it be entrusted beforehand by the Crown with a mandate to call a general election.

It forms actually the great obstacle to a return to constitutional government, for, thanks to it, any coterie appointed to

power by the Crown can install itself in office, with the semblance of popular support, since it is relatively an easy matter for it to win the requisite 40%. It is somewhat surprising that the two main parties have not so far combined to secure the repeal of this law, which is the main instrument by which unpopular governments can be maintained in office, but their attitude may be explained by the fact that each is doubtful in present circumstances of obtaining a clear majority, while if by chance one of them were to be granted a mandate to call a general election it would easily gain the majority through the existing law.

The present law is even unfavourable to the formation of a coalition government, for any one of the constituent parties obtaining 40% of the votes at an election would secure a majority which would dispense it from the obligation of co-operating any longer with other parties. The only way in which the present law could remain operative would be to decide beforehand on the allocation of the seats between the groups forming the coalition, but this is hardly within the bounds of possibilities as each party would insist on securing the largest number of seats for itself, and endless conflicts would be engendered over the allotment of ministerial posts and other functions which would endanger the very existence of the coalition.

Neither is it possible to form a government from among prominent members of the various parties without the participation of the latter, as these would object to being weakened and would react against their former leaders, undermining their prestige and authority, so that in the end such a government would be opposed by the political parties and consequently lose its popularity.

The difficulties inherent in the present electoral law have become obvious through the repeated failures of M. Titulescu to form a Coalition Government and the only explanation we may find for its maintenance is that the King finds in it a useful instrument wherewith to support his nominees in power. In fact, during the (1932) spring session of the Chamber some deputies moved that the law be revised, and the government at first condescended, but later, owing probably to palace influences, the matter was dropped.